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Including Horace

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INCLUDING HORACE

INCLUDING HORACE

BY

LOUIS UNTERMEYER

Author of "These Times,"
"—— and Other Poets," etc.

1885 —

NEW YORK
HARCOURT, BRACE AND HOWE
1919

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TO

H. L. MENCKEN

MORE IN SORROW THAN IN ANGER

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INTRODUCTION

I

QUINTUS HORATIUS FLACCUS, popularly known as Horace, was born in Venusia, a town on the eastern slope of the Apennines, about sixty-five years before the Christian era. He lived fifty-seven years, and lived most of them fully, almost riotously. He was very much the product of his age; in thought he was neither ahead of it nor behind it. When he was not consulting doctors or reading, he was fighting under Brutus against his future patron; carrying on a multiplicity of amours; indulging in a variety of wines; suffering horribly in consequence; taking the warm baths at Baiae and the cold ones at Clusium for his invalidism; forgetting caution and eating rich and almost fatal food with the Roman *élite;* listening half-credulous to the fortune-tellers at the Circus; playing a game of ball with Maecenas; and retiring now and then as a "gentleman-farmer" to his retreat in the Sabine hills.

There were, of course, other distractions, but, except for one thing, he occupied himself very much as would any person of the comfortable middle-class of his time—or of ours. In those crowded fifty-seven

years, whenever he was free from more fascinating diversions, he was a poet. And as a poet he composed vividly patriotic occasional odes, lively satires, charming and unforgettable *vers de société,* and some of the dullest philosophical poems ever written by a genuine poet.

Ever since Davidson published his translations in 1711, an entire literature has grown up around Horace, so great that the poet himself has been almost obscured. Practically every editor has sent forth the Odes and Satires with a mass of erudite notes, of variorum readings, of grammatical and technical criticisms, of dissertations on the metrical intricacies—a collection so weighty that it made Horace seem the pedantic and hair-splitting technician that every freshman suspects him of being. One comes, with surprise and gratification, upon such a fresh and energetic work as E. C. Wickham's "Horace for English Readers" (published at The Clarendon Press), in which Dr. Wickham treats Horace as an old friend instead of an old classic. In these almost casual prose versions the spontaneity and light-heartedness of Horace's finest examples are preserved. And, to acknowledge the debt more directly, it is to this volume in particular that the present paraphraser has turned whenever his small and sketchy stock of Latin has failed him.

Examine, for instance, Horace's love-poetry. Most of the translators have regarded Horace's amorous persiflage as the outpourings of an intense nature—

and have attempted to give it to us with this emphasis. Few indeed have done what Wickham has accomplished in prose, given us Horace in his own mood—light, slyly mocking, petulant, often downright flippant. In spite of his immortal literary harem, his Lydias, his Chloës, his Pyrrhas, his Lalages, there is never in all of Horace's erotic rhymes the note of genuine passion. Unlike a poet such as Catullus, he never lets an emotion overmaster or even control him; he is more concerned with the pleasantries, the disappointments, the incidents and ornaments of love, than with love itself. His attitude is almost that of an amused or interested spectator; he keeps his head; a wave of passionate joy or sweeping bitterness scarcely ever engulfs him.

His amatory poetry reflects this: it is always artistic, always conscious. It is the love-poetry of a middle-aged man; a record of memories, of gentle railleries, of approaching age and corresponding backward glances. The note is always that of sophistication. It is never an outcry. It sings, but it does not surge; it delights, but it never thrills. It is for this reason that the technically artificial versions of Austin Dobson, the colloquial adaptations of Eugene and Roswell M. Field, even the most slangy and impudent burlesques of Franklin P. Adams and Bert Leston Taylor reveal more of the living Horace than the meticulous gravity of Professor Conington and the precise but prosy translations of Addison and Roscommon.

Had Horace been content to remain the poet of ironical and generally playful verses, exquisite in form rather than in substance, the world would have lost some of the most dignified and illuminating records of Roman life that have ever been written; records that, in the satires, rise to eloquent heights. It would also have lost, as hinted before, the platitudinous and vague philosophical ramblings that mar much of his otherwise inimitable work. If the form and diction of the often quoted odes to Postumus, to Sallust, to Grosphus, to Leuconoë, were not so perfect, we should almost wish that Horace had never taken the time to write them. They are full of an empty didacticism that must have been hackneyed long before Solomon wrote the Proverbs. Robbed of the glamour of the verse and boiled down to its essentials, Horace's philosophy is as commonplace as it is reiterative. He cannot, it seems, get over the fact that life is a fragile thing and that we all must die.

Over and over again he tells us to enjoy the present and distrust tomorrow. "The years slip by," he exclaims; and, impressed with the profundity of this thought, repeats it at every opportunity. What are his words on wealth? "All the gold in the world cannot keep you from dying." Likewise, "It is wrong to hoard money," and "The man who is happy is better than a king." His views on friendship? "Friendship is a boon; it is more noble than love. Fill the waiting goblet ere death overtake us." Love? "A silly, childish game; changeable as the weather;

war one moment, peace the next. It is beyond all reason or regulation." Enjoyment? "Pile on the fagots and bring forth the mellowed wine; leave all else to the gods. Life is perilous and hard for those who do not drink. Be temperate, however, in your use of liquors; thirst turns bitter if indulged without restraint, and the man who cannot control himself is little better than a beast," etc., etc. . . . It is the taking of such banalities seriously that robs the translations of even so keen a humorist as Calverley of their otherwise noteworthy merit, and makes the versions of lesser adapters both prim and pitiful. Nothing could be flatter and more vapid than many of these inconsequential thoughts—unless it is the flat and vacuous reproductions of those translators, feverishly intent upon revealing "every shade of Horace's philosophic searchings."

But, though most of his odes and epodes present Horace with all his shortcomings as a lover and thinker, they (as well as the longer and less popular works) show him to be the most gifted and spontaneous writer of occasional poetry in classic or, for that matter, all literature. The thinness of thought and mere graces of writing disappear whenever he turns to civic or national affairs, to chant of victories or patrons, to stir his countrymen to loftier aims—to become, in short, not so much the poet as the man.

Whenever Horace forgot that he was "a high-priest of song," forgot his position as an intimate "friend of the Muses," he wrote the things that sur-

pass in power his most chiseled lyrics. He was a charming versifier every time he wrote a single line, but a great poet only when an occasional one. There was never in his time that peculiar apathy to this sort of verse which exists at present. The feeling which has inhibited the writer of "occasional verse" is the result of a strange misunderstanding: it is a prejudice which has its roots not so much in a dislike as an ignorance of the thing itself. Occasional poetry is, in the best sense, a truly living poetry, because in it the poet must celebrate an occasion rather than an abstraction. It is the picture of an actual thing rather than a speculative generality. It is a pulsating, poetic microcosm; in it the poet must synchronize the thought, the temper, and the atmosphere of his times. Far from trivial, it makes greater demands upon the poet than almost any other manner or theme. It is never, as so many suppose, the exercise of the tyro; it is the test of the master. The man who expresses it fully, expresses not only his age as seen by himself but himself as seen by his age. Horace did this unquestionably. The picture he gives of his period and his relation to it could not be equaled by a dozen volumes of historical data; it is glowing and interpretative—with a single exception. We learn from him little concerning the Woman of his day.

Horace is essentially a man's poet, just as he was essentially a man's man. He never troubled himself to understand women in any other than a physical way. He never speaks of the quality of their minds

but always of the qualities of their bodies. Their whiteness or redness, their arms and ankles, their warmth or frigidity, seem to be the only things about them which interested him. One imagines that even a loose-living reprobate of a bachelor, such as Horace, must have known something more compelling in womankind than the poet saw fit to chronicle. He never regarded or even recognized them as social beings. They were, to him, so many "types"; he seems never to have observed them even as individual mentalities. Once in a while he mentions the lower class of women, the peasants, the farmers' wives, with a grudging sort of respect. But beyond that he does not exert himself. One thinks of him, after many readings of his works, as an aesthetic philanderer; his attitude toward women being a combination of artistic admiration, playfulness, and uncomprehending ridicule.

But the muse that prompted the Satires and Epistles —the one Horace calls his "*Musa pedestris*," who went humbly on foot along earthy roads instead of soaring about Olympus—gave him a far more serious and deep-rooted understanding than the spirit that prompted his other verses. These satires and letters are filled with a speech that is racy and casual. Horace still deals with his favorite topics: the wisdom of enjoying rather than desiring, the folly of hoarding, the shortness of life, the perplexity of religious beliefs. But there is more of the man in these lines; they are keener, warmer, more a result of feeling

than of thinking. Often they take the flavor of *causeries*—so unrhetorical and vivid are his pungent ironies, his revealing bits of gossip.

It is these qualities as well as the poems written during his "laureateship" which make him something more than a dextrous writer of immortal light verse. All in all his work, with its varying temper and its various influences, gives us his picture ineradicably. A keen observer, a commonplace philosopher, a craftsman with a technique at his finger tips, a frank and full-blooded man—good-humored, carnal, something of the mocker, something of the priest. A curious blend, if one can picture it, of Austin Dobson, Heinrich Heine, and Oliver Goldsmith.

II

The present volume is an effort to do two things: First, to suggest, through the thin veil of parody, how certain other poets would have used Horatian subjects—and one famous theme in particular. Second, to present, in a loose set of paraphrases, the spirit rather than the letter of most of Horace's finest odes. A few of these renderings are almost literal translations, approximating, as far as the language will permit, the meters of the original; a few verge perilously on and even descend into burlesque. But the majority of the poems contained in the second part are light-hearted versions that, in their very fragility and varying verse-structure, attempt to reflect the grace and vivacity of the sparkling originals. I have

not even tried (with two or three exceptions) to surmount the insuperable obstacles in the way of bringing over the Latin verse-forms intact into English poetry. We have no natural counterparts for the Alcaiacs and Asclepiads so freely used by Horace. And although John Conington's amazingly precise measures and Warren Cudworth's strophe-for-strophe versions are gallant attempts, for which every student must be grateful, they remain among those works that have dared without attaining the impossible.

It should also be said that the opinions expressed in this introductory note are personal rather than pedagogic. There have been many and striking differences. A. T. Quiller-Couch ("Q"), for one, flatly disagrees with a great part of the foregoing estimate of Horace's work. He believes that Horace's secret is buried in the Odes and "most defiant of capture there"; the Satires having been imitated successfully by Cowper, Dryden, Pope, Goldsmith, and others. In the Odes, "Q" maintains, "lies that witchery of style which, the moment you lose grasp of it, is dissipated into thin air and eludes your concentrated spirit."

There now remains nothing but to acknowledge once more my indebtedness to E. C. Wickham's lively prose renderings, to the microscopic eye of Dudley F. Sicher, without whose vigilance this volume would be even less authoritative than it is now, and to *The Century, The New Republic, The Smart Set, Life, Vanity Fair, The New York Tribune,* and

The New York Evening Post for the privilege of reprinting several of the poems that are here collected. Two of these verses originally appeared in a previous volume of parodies ("—— *and Other Poets*") and the author thanks Henry Holt and Company for permission to reprint them in their present setting.

L. U.

New York, July, 1919.

"INTEGER VITAE"

(TWENTY-FOUR VERSIONS)

ROBERT BRIDGES

TRANSLATES IT IN ITS OWN CLASSIC MEASURES

Integer vitae, scelerisque purus,
non eget Mauris iaculis . . . Book I: Ode 22

He who has lived a blameless life and pure one
Needs naught of Moorish bows or mighty javelins,
Needs neither armored plates nor poisoned arrows,
Fuscus, to shield him,

Whether he roams beside the shoals of Libya,
Or through the barren Caucasus he wanders—
Even in lands where, glorious in fable,
Rolls the Hydaspes . . .

Once in the Sabine woods a wolf beheld me
Strolling about unarmed. He heard me singing,
Singing a song of Lalage—and sudden
The creature vanished.

Direst of monsters! Such a savage terror
Lurks not within the deepest woods of Daunia;
Juba itself, the land that fosters lions,
Breeds naught so frightful.

Oh, place me amid icy desolation,
Where not a tree is cheered by sunny breezes,
Where Jove himself is only seen in sullen
Sleet and gray weather;

Or place me where the very Sun's great chariot
Drives over me in lands that burn and wither—
Still Lalage's sweet words and sweeter laughter
Always shall rouse me.

ROBERT HERRICK

INCLUDES IT IN ONE OF HIS "PIOUS PIECES"

Fuscus, dear friend,
I prithee lend
An ear for but a space,
And thou shalt see
How Love may be
A more than saving grace.

As on a day
I chanced to stray
Beyond my own confines,
Singing, perdie,
Of Lalage,
Whose smile no star outshines—

So 'tranced were all
Who heard me call
On Love, that from a grot
A wolf who heard
That tender word
Listened and harmed me not.

Thus shielded by
. The magicry
Of Love that kept me pure,
I live to praise
Her wondrous ways
Where'er I may endure.

There's but one plan:
The honest man
Wears Vertue's charmèd spell;
And, free from vice,
That man lives twice
Who lives the one life well.

ROBERT BROWNING

ENLARGES UPON IT IN SEVERAL OF HIS MANNERS AND INTERPOLATES A LYRIC

I

This is the tale:
Friend, you shall know the right and the wrong of it.
Listen, before old Sirius grows pale
And the tang leaves the ale—
For, saith the poet, all things have an end,
Even beauty must fail,
The rapture and song of it.
Here, to be brief, is the short and the long of it—
Listen, my friend.

II

Virtue, I hold, is the raiment to travel in.
Fuscus, my friend, if you're swaddled in virtue,
Never a spear-head, a sword or a javelin,
No, not an arrow that's poisoned can hurt you.
Virtue is more than a shield or a stirrup;
Virtue's the charm—it will shock sloth and rasp ease,
Even in lands where the lazy Hydaspes

Ambles along like a curious syrup;
Aye, and in climes where the voice is as raucous as
Winds in the barren and harborless Caucasus.
Fuscus, the man who is guiltless is fearless;
He's of the chosen, the purple, the peerless—
What does he care for a frown more, a cheer less?
Bearing the falchion of Truth—
But I bore you.
Plague take all pedantry. Learning, what stuff is it . . .
Weighty and erudite preambles—*Sufficit!*
Here, you shall have only facts set before you,
Told in my harsh but imperative accents.
(Music in which the musician must pack sense
Cannot be sensuous with every syllable)
But—here's the tale, though as teller I'm ill able
(Would I were worthy!) to render the glories
Of my adventure—how goes it? . . . *O mores!*
I tell it in rhyme like an intricate minuet
To caution the soul that, I warrant, is in you yet;
Didactic with hoping—why should I deny it—
You'll guess at the moral and, what's more, apply it!

III

One day I went wandering casually;
The sky was a deep *lapis lazuli;*
The poplars were rustling with merriment,
As half in a burst, half experiment,
I sang, without fear or apology,
Of honor, of love—and of Lalage.

And yet, 'neath the ballad's urbanity
Was an echo of Life and its vanity.
The fabric of living, how sheer it is,
How fragile . . . The song—eh? Well, here it is.

IV *

What's love that you should ask
How long Life's sands will run—
See how the butterflies bask
On the crocus lips i' the sun.
Theirs is no mighty task . . .
And yet who'ld say ill-done?

The years glide swiftly by.
How swiftly, no one knows;
The drainers and dancers will lie
I' the long, stark night 'neath the snows.
The clay outlives the cry;
The thorn survives the rose.

Love, even as we stay,
Age subtly strokes thy cheek.
Let us snatch Time's sleeve while we may,
Ere the heart with the hand grows weak.
Come, let us live to-day —
What's life but loving . . . Speak!

* *Vide* **Book I: Ode II.**

V

Well, as I sang, thinking no whit of harm,
I walked along, when . . . zooks, before me sprang
A wolf, a monster with a head like Death's,
As—how d'ye call—Apulia does not rear,
Or Juba, land that's nursing-mother to lions,
Never gave birth to. How my heart flew up!
Gr-r-r-r he stood growling in my very path.
Flesh and blood—that's all I'm made of, friend.
What to do? Fly at his face? Turn tail
And run as fast as legs could carry me?
Thus, craving your pardon, sir, might you have done.
Not I . . . My mind was set, my conscience clear;
I faltered not and kept on with my song.
With that the beast retreats, gives way, runs off—
And I am left alone, unscratched, unscathed;
A victor without arms, a conqueror without strife.
(There's thought for you in this, and moral too.)
And so all's right with me, and so I go
Singing of Lalage in every place—
Spring, summer, winter, autumn—what's the odds;
Lalage, her sweet prattle, sweeter laughter . . .
Believe it, Fuscus, to the righteous man
There's no hurt in this world but love and song
Can draw the sting and leave all sound again.
Now, let us understand the matter, sift the thing.
Here, in a nutshell, is the crux of it:
Old Euclid teaches—ha! d'ye note the dawn!—
That—What? Must you be going?
Well, good-night . . .

SAMUEL T. COLERIDGE

LETS THE ANCIENT MARINER PARAPHRASE IT

Horace meeteth a friend and detaineth him with advice.

He liveth best who loveth best
All virtues great and small,
And neither knife nor heavy strife
Shall make him fear at all.

And telleth how the man that is clear of conscience goeth fully armed.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
In lonely lands though he may be,
He shall not lift his voice in moan
But it shall have a pleasant tone,
Like a blessèd melody.

He relateth a tale of a wondrous escape.

O listen well and I shall tell
The reason of my rime.
Know then, while walking it befell
I wandered through a little dell,
Singing away the time.

How the wolf appeared to him and what ensued.

When huge and weird a wolf appeared,
The while my singing ceased;
He looked me up, he looked me down,
And, like a wave of living brown,
With one stride came the beast.

How that his own virtue made manifest to the beast, did save him.

Without a breath, without a pause,
I sang her name full clear.
And seized with dread the monster fled;
He saw about my shining head
A stronger thing than fear . . .

He teacheth, by his own example, love and reverence for all things.

He liveth best who loveth best
All things, below, above.
So, Fuscus, call, the first of all
And last of all, on Love!

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

SOLILOQUIZES UPON IT

The quality of virtue is not strained;
It falleth sweetly on the upright soul
And clothes the spirit with a suit of mail.
The honest man, with neither bow nor shield,
Envenomed arrows, daggers, javelins,
Can stand unarmed against a sea of troubles
And, by opposing, end them. Whether he walk
Beside the huge and multitudinous waves,
Or through unharbored Caucasus he roam,
Nothing shall lift its great, abhorrent head
And freeze the quivering marrow in his bones.
There's a divinity doth hedge a man
Who feareth naught, rough-hew him how you will.
Why, I have seen this wonder come to pass:
As I went singing lately through a wood,
A wolf all teeth, a wolf of savage hate,
A wolf, whose every movement was a threat,
Sprang at me snarling, like the winds of March.
But king-becoming graces soothe the beasts
And music charms them with her silver sound;
So on I went, unchecked by groveling fear.
I tell thee, Fuscus, Life is but a plant;
Honor and righteousness its sun and rain,
And Heaven grants such precious nourishment
To save the flower from the canker, Death.

A. C. SWINBURNE

ALLITERATIVELY REVOLVES ALL AROUND IT

No murmurs, no moons have arisen;
  No laughter to live with the light,
And the earth, like a blind thing in prison,
  Must gnaw through the nimbus of night.
We cry and we quail and we quiver,
  We fly from the fervors of Life—
But the pure and the passionate liver
    Feareth no knife!

The heaven is hushed, its great heart aches,
  The quiet is cruel and cold;
Yet somewhere a lyrical star takes
  My longings and gives them its gold.
The world and its warring may rack me,
  Its sorrows may sting like a thong—
But I sing and, though wolves should attack me,
    I thrill with my song.

For Lalage's lips have the magic
  Of rhyme and the unravished rose;
And the terrible times are not tragic;
  I am brave 'neath the bitterest blows.
For She is the bountiful bringer
  Of joy even brighter than pain—
And, blesséd or damned, I shall sing her
    Again and again!

HEINRICH HEINE

TRANSLATES IT INTO GERMAN, AFTER WHICH IT IS "ENGLISHED" BY JOHN TODHUNTER

Good lives are like an arrow,
So straight and clean and pure;
The thought of them will gladden
And move the heart, I'm sure.

From out the songs I fashion
There comes a strength so grand,
That wolves and all things evil
Its power cannot withstand.

Where'er I go it follows,
Like to the moon above;
And fills all the earth and heavens
With love and the light thereof.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI & OSCAR WILDE

BEGIN A BALLAD ON IT

The wind is weary, the world is wan;
(*Oh, lone, lank lilies and long, lean loves*)
My shield is shed, my armor is gone,
And Virtue is all I depend upon.
(*My lily,*
My lissome lily, my languid love.)

Full thirteen days have I walked with woe,
(*Oh dear, dead days and divine desires*)
And wolves may follow where'er I go,
But nothing shall stop my song's sweet flow.
(*My lily,*
My love, my delirious, dark desire.)

The night is old and threadbare and thin,
(*Oh limpid lily, oh labial love*)
And at this point I shall straightway begin
Repeating the Ballad *ad lib., ad infin.* . . .
(*My lily,*
My lilting, loquacious, repetitive love.)

EDGAR ALLAN POE

FINDS IT FULL OF LUNAR POSSIBILITIES

It was midnight, the month was November;
The skies, they were cheerless and cold,
The forest was trembling and old;
And my heart it was grey, I remember,
As I walked through the hyaline wold.
The moon was a perishing ember,
The heavens were ashen and cold.

It was midnight, and so to restore me
To laughter and solace from pain,
I sang and the melody bore me
To Israfel's bosom again,
To the regions enchanted again;
I felt the dim Beauty flow o'er me,
The fever of living seemed vain,
And Death but a shadow of pain.
And I sang, though a wolf stood before me.

I sang of the terrors titanic,
Of ghouls and the breath of the tomb,
Of scoriac floods and volcanic,
Of Helen, Lenore, Ulalume,
Of devils from hell free,
Of bells in the belfry,

Of the banging and the clanging as they boom,
boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom.
I sang of these things, and in panic
The wolf disappeared in the gloom—
He left me alone in the gloom.

But Lalage's eyes I remember;
I shall dream of them till I grow old,
When Lenore and Ligeia are cold.
They are with me in June and September,
October, November, December,—
Though the skies may be barren and old,
And the forest is nothing but mold;
Though the moon is a perishing ember,
And the heavens are ashen and cold.

C. S. CALVERLEY

TRIES IT IN A NEW METER

The man who's had a blameless life
    Never needs armor,
Nor Moorish spear nor two-edged knife;
    Nothing will harm or
  Impede his progress in the land
  Of Caucasus or Libya; and
  Though others' joys be sweetly planned
    His will be far more.

Once, I recall, as through a wood
    Where fancy led me,
I sang of Lalage (too good
    And fair to wed me),
  A wolf that happened to appear,
  Stopped as he saw me passing near
  And, half in wonder, half in fear,
    Abashed, he fled me.

* * * * *

Still will I sing of her, although
    I dwell forever
In barren lands 'mid ice and snow,
    Or those where never

The kindly shade and shelter are
Beneath Apollo's flaming car.
She still will be the guiding star
Of my endeavor.

AUSTIN DOBSON

BUILDS A RONDEAU AROUND IT

An upright man need never dread
The blows of Fate; he who has led
  A blameless life is safer far
  Than kings in frowning castles are,
For he is armed with Truth instead.

Once, as I roamed with careless tread,
A wolf who heard me turned and fled.
  He felt that I was, more than czar,
    An upright man.

So when the last refrain is said
Above my narrow, rose-strewn bed,
  Say not, "He worshiped flower and star."
  Say not, "He loved *sans* let or bar."
But write these words above my head:
    "An Upright Man."

WALT WHITMAN

RHAPSODIZES ABOUT IT

I sing the conscience triumphant,
I celebrate the body invulnerable.
The firm tread, the square jaw, the unflinching eye, the resolute voice,
Mind equal with matter, I chant.
I see the Roman singer standing erect,
His figure rises
Masculine, haughty, naïf;
He confronts and answers me.
Me, spontaneous, imperturbe,
Loafing, swaggering, at ease with Nature,
Passive, receptive, gross, immoderate, fit,
Broad-shouldered and ripe, a good feeder, weight one hundred and eighty-seven pounds, warm-blooded, forty-two inches around the breast and back, voluptuous, combative, vulgar,
Bearded, continental, prophetic;
Understander of beasts and scholars, meeting children and Presidents on equal terms.
I hail him with the others.
He, walking about unarmed and care-free,
Pleased with all countries, climates, conditions,
Pleased with bleak Caucasus, sultry Syrtes, the woods of Daunia,

Pleased with all seasons, fortunes, women, the native
as well as the foreign;
Fearing no thing, hating no thing,
Upright in life, of conduct clean;
A lover, caresser of life, prodigal, inclusive,
Him I hail without effuse or argument.
I accept him, do not scrape or salaam,
Knowing him to be made of the right stuff,
No perfumed dilettante, no dainty affetuoso,
But a man,
Upright, solemn, desperate, yearning, puzzled, turbulent, sound,
Loved by men, misunderstood by men,
Going on, fulfilling the hopes of a great rapport.
Libertad!—the divine average!—the rich mélange!—
On the wasted plain, the dark-lipped sea, the hottest
noon, the bitterest twelfth-month
Solitary, singing, I strike up and declare for these.

J. M. SYNGE

PUTS IT INTO THE IDIOM OF THE ARRAN ISLANDS

And it's himself that should have no call to be fearing hard words or bitter blows or evil gossip or to be destroyed by the blow of a loy, itself—he, after living a good life and a fine one. Many's the night I have walked whistling along a twisty road with no light ahead and no light behind, and only a slip of a moon, like the youngest of the angels, timid and bobbing before me. And sometimes, maybe, it would be in a wood I'd find myself, fearing no wolves or any living thing at all, but would be after dreaming of grand evenings in houses of gold or be listening to the young girls and young men making mighty talk. And there'd be little stirring but the sound of laughter far off—and I lifting my voice in lonely song. Ah, it's a great blessing, I'm saying, to be pure of heart and to have the sweetness of youth and the lonely wisdom of the old. And it's a better thing, I'm thinking, to have the grand gift of song; to be singing even when the suns of June do be broiling or the bitter winds do be blowing on me, till I'd feel my blood stopping like a small stream in the winter nights. For it's the singer that's young and wise, and the sweetness of all the ages is given to him, surely.

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

MAKES AN INDIANA "NEIGHBORLY POEM" OUT OF IT

I ain't, ner don't p'tend to be,
Much posted on philosofy,
But to my truly rural mind
The feller that is good an' kind
Ain't worritin' his whole life through
'Bout what the worl' might say er do.

I allus argy that a man
That lives as natchurl as he can
Is jes' as safe as safe can be
In fur-off lands as Zekesbury.

Why, onc't I kindo' los' my way
In Mills's woods, but I wuz gay
An' singin'-like, when—Jeemses-whizz!
A wolf that looked like he ment biz,
Come snarlin' at me . . . Wuz I skeered?
I kep' right on. He disappeared!
An' sence that day my doctern's bin
To teach all you-uns how to win
The goal by livin' as you oughter.
(*A Hoosier-picture here by Vawter*).

I ain't, ner don't p'tend to be,
Much posted on philosofy,
But to my truly rural mind
It pays to jes' be good an' kind.

GUY WETMORE CARRYL

TURNS IT INTO A NEW FABLE FOR THE FRIVOLOUS

Beneath a wood's umbrageous limbs,
  Where leaves and beasts aplenty lay,
A Latin bard went singing hymns
  Of where *festina lente* lay.
Unarmed, unharmed he walked along;
His ardor and his voice were strong;
And all the forest heard his song,
  His *dolce-far-niente*-lay.

Gaily he sang of love—when lo,
  A savage wolf confronted him;
The creature looked and eyed him so,
  It looked as if it wanted him.
But Horace (thus he leaped to Fame),
Acting as though the beast were tame,
Sang, "Nice old doggie. What's your name?"
  In short, it never daunted him.

And, like a skilful amateur,
  He jumped an octave tastily.
The wolf, although no connoisseur,
  Went off a little space till he

Observed that Horace loved to dwell
On all the trills and high-notes. Well,
The beast gave one reproachful yell
And left the poet—hastily!

THE MORAL: Every student will
Applaud the beast with such a vim;
They too of Horace get their fill
Instead of just a touch of him.
The wolf, when Horace would not cease,
Could get no piece, lean or obese—
And since he gave the wolf no peace,
The wolf had far too much of him!

W. H. DAVIES

MAKES IT SIMPLER THAN EVER

The man that's good,
  He never has
To wear a hood
  Of steel or brass.

No shield he's got,
  No sword or gun;
He's safe in what
  He may have on.

A friend of elves,
  He tries his tunes
On shaggy wolves
  And burly bruins.

He sings an air
  That's old and sweet,
And ladies fair
  Sit at his feet.

They give him tea,
  They bring him food.
Who would not be
  The man that's good?

ROBERT FROST

TAKES IT UP TO NEW HAMPSHIRE

He took the rifle from the cupboard shelf
And, having oiled the catch and greased the barrel,
He put it back again. At last he turned
And tried the window-locks, and stood awhile
Watching the snow pile hummocks on itself
Where there was scarcely any need for mounds,
And lay fresh sheets above the piece of ground,
Such as it was, that soon would be his bed.
Something, somebody's saying, half a phrase
Kept him there standing at the kitchen door.
It almost came, escaped him, and went out
Back to the pine-trees where it grew. He followed,
Afraid of nothing but a childish fear
Of all outdoors that made him hum his tune
A little louder than he meant to do.
"In Amsterdam there lived a maid"—and so
On to the shameless end of it; at least
Nearly the end. For, toward the final bars,
Behind the witch-grass and hepaticas,
A great white wolf appeared as suddenly
As though the snow had made or blown him there.
He thought of fairy-tales he had forgotten
And what, for reasons, he could not forget

Of werewolves and the time he had run off
To see the animals in Barnum's circus.
He took a doubtful step and then undid it
To gain a minute's time; thought of the gun
Within hand's reach; then put the thought
Out of his mind to let another in:
Something he must have heard or maybe read
Concerning music and the savage breast.
So to his song again, and to the last
Lewd notes of it. When he looked up, there was
A windless stir in the forsythia trees,
An empty space where the strange beast had been,
And nothing else changed from an hour ago.
The moon went through a twisted apple tree
That leaned its crooked length against the sky.
A log snapped in the stove, reminding him
That he had meant to bring some kindling in
And that it must be late and he was cold.
He watched the moon a moment, shut the door;
Tried all the window-locks again, pulled down
The shades, blew out the light and clomped upstairs.

CARL SANDBURG

CONSIDERS IT ON STATE STREET, CHICAGO, ILL.

Take it from me,
When the cops are gone and the long barrels of the Remingtons are only a long smear of rust,
When the guns of France and the arrows of Rome Are part of the red mud,
When the chilled steel rots,
The lovers will rise . . . from the dusk . . . in the new grass.

Take it from me,
When New York is corn for the huskers, and Pekin and Hamburg are mixed with the dust of Daunia,
When the gray wolf prowls in the jungle that used to be Main Street,
The lovers will sing . . . in the dusk . . . in the new grass.

Believe me or not, Danny,
Iron won't help and the sword will be softer than virtue.
You'll know, some day, I said a mouthful,
When a young star winks at you through a cobweb

And the ghosts of the past are put out of business.
When the old moon stands still and the earth is
rammed into silence,
Take it from me,
The lovers will laugh . . . in the dusk . . . in
the new grass. . . .

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

IS HALF-CAUSTIC, HALF-CRYPTIC ABOUT IT

Horatius Flaccus, child of fate,
  Was honest as the fabled farmer;
His gentle virtues held him strait
  As though they were a suit of armor.
His guileless spirit always hid
What ruder natures went and did,
And all he knew of ways forbid
  Was kept from every charmer.

Careless of this or that mischance,
  He walked the outskirts daily;
Convinced that each fell circumstance
  Would somehow meet him gaily.
So that he watched with half a yawn
A brute upon his new-cut lawn,
A hairy sort of devil's spawn,
  Red-eyed and almost scaly.

The creature stretched unearthly jaws;
  Hell opened to affright him.
But Flaccus, holding to the laws
  Of what could not excite him,

Followed a path direct and long,
Continuing to shape his song;
"The man," it went, "who knows no wrong
Is armed" . . . *ad infinitum.*

And with this bland, incurious faith
He passed a calm existence;
Having, for all the ghosts, no wraith
Of question or resistance;
Held to a bright security,
Like sunlight on a fallen tree,
Or voices rising from the sea,
Waking a moonlit distance.

AMY LOWELL

GROWS POLYPHONICALLY PROSY CONSIDERING IT

North, South, East, West, there is no rest for a man save he has something stronger than arrows or a narrow shield to guard him. Hard are the envious blows of critics, a multitude of foes, but harder still are the mind and will of the man who has fought distortion for a span of years. Fears are not his portion; his life, squandered so soon, goes to the tune of Blood and Honey.

Blood and Honey! It sings in the glittering sands of the Hydaspes. Blood and Honey! It rings through the bitter lands of Caucasus and skirts the chrome-yellow Syrtes, rambling along its bramble-covered sides. Blood and Honey! It glides and swings its flame-colored notes against the polished throats of Canterbury bells; swells and spills its lavish rhythms over daffodils and squills. The lilies with breasts of alabaster and hearts of snow tremble and glow among the asters, japonica, larkspur, and sword-shaped iris-leaves. The pattern weaves and interweaves. Blood and Honey!

In the heart of a wood,
One man is faced by a wolf.
He pauses and stares—
Stopped by the torture of a blood-shot sun,

Held by the mauve and cobalt clattering in the west.
He hesitates . . . then sings.
Dragonflies dart about him,
Like multi-colored arrows;
An iris—or is it a butterfly?—
Opens and closes its leaf-like wings;
Plum-blossoms settle on his shoulders,
Crystals of fragrant snow;
The sky is lacquered with lilac and red.
The song ascends.
And with it rises an enameled moon . . .
In the heart of a wood
One man is singing alone.

And still he sings! Carried on fantastic wings, his passion seeps through the earth, sweeps over water, leaps through the air. Everywhere its echoes wake laughter and unrest in a thousand breasts. It never stops, but drops of its music fall like the tinkle of pearls in a silver pan. Sweetly-smiling, sweetly-prattling girls rattle their bracelets and keep beguiling man with snatches of its magic. Its beauty catches one by the heart, the throat. It floats, like ivory surf on the curved tops of waves, into each dusty corner of the years. One hears it going on . . . on . . . it never veers . . . Straight on it goes, stopped by no gate; it knows no bars. On . . . on . . . pushing against the pointed stars . . . Crushing out wars and hate . . . On . . . on . . .

MAKE WHAT THEY CAN OF IT

Listen,
Aristius Fuscus;
it is not the quiver
bursting with arrows,
nor sudden spears,
nor certainly the warmth of
confident armor
that shields
a man . . .

Here is a wood
full of blue winds
and dead symbols;
full of white sounds,
hints out of China,
and clashing invisible flowers . . .
Why should I tremble?

Now let me pause . . .
now let me sing of you,
plangent and conquering . . .
with furious hair,
green and impalpable features,
and fluent caresses . . .

why should I tremble,
and stammer
like moonlight
caught on black branches . . .

Now like a fish
in the net of to-morrow
let my heart batten
on the thought of your face;
let my soul feed
on the red rind of passion,
softly . . . exulting.

Out of the hush
of the arches of night,
from the core of despair
let me remember
climate and javelins,
laughter and Lalage,
virtue and wolves . . .
And so forth . . .

Et cetera . . . . . .

CONRAD AIKEN & T. S. ELIOT

COLLABORATE UPON IT

It is late, says Fenris, and the evening trembles
Like jelly placed upon an old man's table.
It is late, he says, and I am scarcely able
To keep my collar up, attend the latest play,
Mumble stale gossip; cough and turn away;
Grope in confusion down an endless hall.
The evening drags . . . and why should I dissemble?
I am tired, I tell you, tired of it all . . .
The heavy dawns, the dying fall
Of music ending in a cloud of gray.
Virtue is ashes; mist and fog
Cover the worm-eaten trees. A block away
Some one is singing tunes to a mangy dog.
A thin light tops the sky like a moldy crust.
And should I read a paper, smoke a pipe,
While the full moon hangs like an overripe
Pippin upon the rotted branch of day?
Twilight and sodden rain . . . boredom and lust . . .
It is like a piece I used to play . . .
What were the lines? . . . I dream . . . I cannot
say . . .
The harlot's laugh has a coating of rust . . .

There was a bow . . . and javelins . . . some one
said
Juba . . . or was it Lalage . . . I forget.
I am tired, I tell you, tired . . . and yet
How shall I force the ineffectual crisis?
The air is poisoned with a delicate regret.
In the Copley-Plaza men are serving ices.
I fidget in my seat, pull down my vest:
Adjust my new cravat and chatter, while
Death slides among the dancers, strokes a breast,
Rattles the xylophone, slinks down the hall
And pares an apple with a weary smile.
The music twists and curves . . . an alley cat
Adds its high tenor; wan, malignant, flat.
A siren echoes . . . Can I have no rest?
For I am tired . . . tired of the strident brawl . . .
Tired of *ennui* . . . tired of it all . . .
Silence is better than the twice-expressed.
In countless volumes new leaves turn and fall . . .
I have seen them all . . . I have seen them all.

FRANKLIN P. ADAMS

TREATS IT FAMILIARLY

Fuscus, old top, an honest phiz
  Fears no police-court's shameful durance;
The guy who's square—his virtue is
    His life insurance.

He's playing safe. He wears his grin
  Alike in Brooklyn or Tahiti,
In Murky Michigan or in
    This well-known city.

Why, once when I had lost my way
  A wolf espied and almost clutched me;
I merely sang a tune—and say,
    He never touched me.

And such a wolf! It seemed at least
  A dozen to your Uncle Horace;
As Terence said, it was *some* beast!
    Believe me, Mawruss.

Since then I've strayed without a pang
  Wherever f - - kle Fo - - une bore me;
No foes came near whene'er I sang—
    They fled before me.

So, as a lyric Q. E. D.—
  When this here planet's "dry"—and tearful,
Keep singing. . . . That's my recipe?
    You said an earful.

IRVING BERLIN

JAZZES IT UP IN RAGTIME

Mister Horace, won't you come and sit with me;
Play a tune that's made an awful hit with me.
Go and get your fiddle;
Rosin up your bow;
Here's a little riddle
That I'd like to know.
So——
Tell me why your music makes me feel so good;
Cheers up everybody in the neighborhood.
I ain't never worried;
Gee! I'm awful strong
For the grass and cows and chickens,
And my heart beats like the dickens
When I hear you singing that song.

Chorus:

Play me that Integer Vitae Rag;
(*It gives me joy.*)
Lose your blues and go on a musical jag.
(*Oh boy!*)
It's the latest, greatest, sort of new sensation,
Watch your step! There's pep in this here syncopation.
Don't it beat creation how it hits you with a slam!
(*My honey lamb!*)

So play that mysterious, serious drag;
(*Oh mister please!*)
I'd get delirious if it should weary us and lag—
(*I'm on my knees.*)
Take my rings and other things, my socks or nightie,
If you'll only play that flighty, Gosh Almighty,
Highty-tighty,
Integer Vitey
Ra-hag!

OTHER ODES

"ON WITH THE DANCE!"

Quid bellicosus . . . Book II: Ode 11

Why all these questions that worry and weary us?
Let's drop the serious rôle for a while.
Youth, with smooth cheeks, will be laughing behind us;
Age will not mind us; the cynic—he'll smile.

Come, for the gray hairs already are fretting us;
Girls are forgetting us. Lord, how we've got!
Come, let's convince them our blood is—well, red yet.
We are not dead yet. Let's show them we're not!

Yes, we'll have cups till you can't keep a count of them;
Any amount of them—hundreds, at least.
I'll have the table all tempting and tidy—
And we'll get Lyde to come to the feast!

"TEARS, IDLE TEARS . . ."

Quid fles, Asterie . . . Book III: Ode 7

Why are you weeping for Gyges?
  Your lover, though absent, is true.
As soon as warm weather obliges,
    He'll come back to you.

At Oricus, snow-bound and grieving,
  He yearns for domestic delights.
He longs for the moment of leaving;
    He lies awake nights.

His hostess, a lady of fashion,
  Is trying to fan up a few
Stray flames of his fiery passion,
    Lit only for you.

With sighs and suggestive romances
  She does what a sorceress can.
But Gyges—he scorns her advances;
    The noble young man.

But you—how about your bold neighbor?
  Does he please your still lachrymose eye?
When he gallops past, flashing his saber,
    Do you watch him go by?

When he swims, like a god, down the river,
  Do you dry the perpetual tear?
Does your heart give the least, little quiver?
    Be careful, my dear.

Be warned, and be deaf to his pleadings;
  To all of his questions be mute.
Do not heed any soft intercedings
    That rise from his flute.

Lock up when the day has departed,
  Though the music grows plaintive or shrill.
And though he may call you hard-hearted,
    Be obdurate still!

GROWING OLD DISGRACEFULLY

Uxor pauperis Ibyci . . . Book III: Ode 15

B.C. 35

Wife of poor Ibycus, listen; a word with you.
How can you seem so outrageously gay?
Think of your age! It is sad and absurd, with you
Acting this way.

Truly, old lady, it's time that you ceased all this;
Here, with young girls, you should never be found.
Stop those ridiculous antics; at least all this
Running around.

It's all very well for a kitten like Pholoë
To smile at the lads who repay her in kind,
But when *you* approach them, they rapidly stroll away—
Lord, are you blind!

Strange, you won't see that the thing which delights a man
Is always the dancer and seldom the dance;
A Thyiad with white hair and wrinkles affrights a man;
He looks askance.

Roses and romance and wine-jars are *not* for you;
There is the loom and the raw wool to comb,
Mending and baking and—oh, there's a lot for you
Right here at home!

A.D. 1919

You are old, Mrs. Ibycus, wrinkled and old,
And still you are going the pace;
Your actions are scandalous. Really, I'm told
They know you all over the place.

You doll yourself up like a girl of sixteen,
You tango from morning to night;
You wear out your partners, you primp and you preen—
"Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

You run after boys that are just out of school;
You trot with your daughter's young men;
Forgetting that chickens may do, as a rule,
What's forbidden a silly old hen.

Oh rub off the rouge of your giddy career,
And send back your drinks to the bar;
"The home is the sphere for a woman," my dear,
—When the woman's as old as you are.

THE TEASING OF XANTHIAS

Ne sit ancillae . . . Book II: Ode 4

You never need blush, since your love for a hand-maid,
Friend Xanthias, is known to—well, more than a few.
Conceal it no more. Here's a girl who is planned, made
And fashioned for you.

Briseis, the slave-girl, with tints like the lily's,
Her body a mingling of fire and snow,
Enraptured the noble and haughty Achilles—
A thing that you know.

And Ajax, the fearless and well-known defier,
Was snared by Tecmessa, the modest and grave;
Though he was a lord who could surely look higher,
And she was his slave.

And as for your Phyllis who scorns your sesterces,
Her family tree may be broad as an oak's.
Her people, I'm sure, though upset by reverses,
Were eminent folks.

A girl so devoted, unlike any other
  Your arm may have had the occasion to crush,
Could never, believe me, be born of a mother
    For whom you need blush.

Her arms and the turn of her ankles enthuse me;
  Her face has the glamour that all men adore.
What! Jealous? You mean it? Go on—you amuse me!
    I'm forty—and more.

A HAPPY ENDING

Donec gratus eram tibi . . . Book III: Ode 9

HORACE

Once (even twice) your arms to me would cling,
Before your heart made various excursions;
And I was happier than the happiest king
Of all the Persians.

LYDIA

So long as I remained your constant flame,
I was a proud and rather well-sung Lydia,
But now, in spite of all your precious fame,
I'm glad I'm rid o' ye.

HORACE

Ah well, I've Chloë for my present queen.
Her voice would thrill the marble bust of Caesar;
And I would exit gladly from the scene
If it would please her.

LYDIA

And as for me, with every burning breath,
I think of Calaïs, my handsome lover,
For him not only would I suffer death,
But die twice over.

HORACE

What if the old love were to come once more
With smiling face and understanding tacit;
If Chloë went, and I'd unbar the door,
Would you—er—pass it?

LYDIA

Though he's a star that's constant, fair and true,
And you're as light as cork or wild as fever;
With all your faults I'd live and die with you,
You old deceiver!

A LINGERING ADIEU

AS W. S. GILBERT MIGHT HAVE RENDERED IT

Vixi puellis nuper idoneus . . . Book III: Ode 26

As a militant lover
I've taken to cover;
The lyrics of love—I have sung them all.
My lutes and my armor
Will rouse not a charmer;
In the temple of Venus I've hung them all.

Though aging and hoary,
Yet not without glory
I entered Love's lists when he 'sought me to;
Each maid I enraptured,
I came, saw and captured—
And lo, this is what it has brought me to.

Here, then, lay the crow-bars;
The door now needs no bars
That used to be fastened so tight to me.
Lay down Cupid's arrows—
The thought of them harrows
When girls are no sort of delight to me.

Yet, Goddess, whose feelings
Know not the congealings
Of Winter, the sting and the clutch of it,
Come down where it's snowy,
And give this cold Chloë
The lash—and a generous touch of it!

IT ALWAYS HAPPENS

Albi, ne doleas plus nimio memor
immitis Glycerae . . . Book I: Ode 33

Grieve not too much, my Albius, since Glycera is no longer
As worthy of your constant love and amatory sighs
As in the yesterdays, and since a taller man and younger,
Who once embraced her slender waist, seems fairer in her eyes.

Lycoris of the little brow loves Cyrus unrequited;
While he in turn will madly burn for rustic Pholoë—
Yet shall Apulian wolves with docile she-goats be united
Ere he persuade this wilful maid to smile and turn his way.

Such is the will of Her who rules the destinies of lovers;
For Cupid's courts hold cruel sports when wanton Venus reigns.
And underneath her brazen yoke one oftentimes discovers
Young couples who, ill-suited to each other, curse their chains.

Thus once the little Myrtale, a slave-born girl and lowly,
As wild and free as is the sea beneath Calabrian skies,
So captured me with pleasing ways I swore to love her solely—
When from the glade a worthier maid looked on with longing eyes.

A STRAIGHT TIP TO ALBIUS

(THE SHADE OF VILLON SPEAKS)

Albi, ne doleas . . . Book I: Ode 33

Stop being peeved about that skirt;
  Cut out those maudlin songs—and hurry!
What if she is a heartless flirt?
    You should worry!

You know that little low-brow dame,
  Lycoris—well, her eyes still glisten
Only for Cyrus Whatsisname.
    And he—Well, listen . . .

Cyrus, the unresponsive brute,
  To Pholoë turns all his wooing;
But she—she doesn't give a hoot;
    There's nothing doing.

She tells him, with a tilted nose,
  Together goats and wolves will revel
Before she'll have him . . . So it goes.
    It beats the devil.

Yes, so it goes. Why, look at me.
Once I was more than happy, sowing
Wild oats with Mamselle Myrtale;
She had me going.

And all the while a loftier miss
Desired *me* . . . I should regret it?
No, Albius. In a case like this,
Old top, forget it.

BARINE, THE INCORRIGIBLE

Ulla si iuris . . . Book II: Ode 8

If only once for every perjured oath,
Each broken tryst and troth,
One punishment, one scar, one cheek too pale,
One broken finger-nail;
If but one blemish would appear and grieve you,
I might believe you.

But in your case, with every faithless vow
You sparkle more somehow;
You go abroad to break, with bright untruth,
The hearts of all our youth;
You swear still falsely by the gods above you—
And still they love you!

Yes, Venus gossips with her laughing crew,
While every Nymph laughs too;
And even Cupid, busy at his art,
Pointing the fiery dart,
In spite of all his labors pauses nightly,
And chuckles lightly.

Beguiled by you the lad grows up your slave,
Freed only by the grave.
And though he leaves you, though the new-wed spouse
Forsakes your godless house,
He comes back pleading at your doors for mercy—
Light-hearted Circe!

HORACE LOSES HIS TEMPER

Extremum Tanain si biberes . . . Book III: Ode 10

Your husband is stern and you're adamant, Lyce,
Oh yes, there is not the least doubt of it.
But open the door, for the weather is icy;
Let me in out of it.

Oh, cruel you are to behold me, unweeping,
All huddled and drenched like a rabbit here;
Exposed to the pitiless snow and the sweeping
Winds that inhabit here.

The blast, like the sharpest of knives, cuts between us—
Ah, will you rejoice if I freeze to death?
Come, put off the pride that is hateful to Venus;
Come, ere I sneeze to death!

Your sire was a Tuscan—may Hercules club me
Or crush out my life like a mellow pea—
But who in Gehenna are you that you snub me?
You're no Penelope!

Forgive me. I know that I rail like a peasant,—
But, won't you be more than a friend to me?
Won't tears and my prayers—and the costliest present
Make you unbend to me?

Once more I implore; give my pleadings a fresh hold;
My soul in its torment still screams to you . . .
What? Think you I'll lie down and die on your threshold?
Good Night! And bad dreams to you!

A GRACEFUL EVASION

Scriberis Vario . . . **Book I: Ode 6**

Some other bard, Vipsanius, less wedded to his slavery,
Some lyricist like Varius with a more Homeric touch,
Shall celebrate your victories, belligerence and bravery,
Shall sing about your leadership, your strategy and such.

But I, dear general, such as I who could not think an Odyssey,
Can no more sing your martial deeds than tell the burning tale
Of Troy or shrewd Ulysses when, deserted by a goddess, he
Defied the sea heroically with half a tattered sail.

I know my limitations and—this is no mock humility—
My lyre balks at thundering themes and other warlike lures;
Its pleasant lilt, its fluent grace, its rhythmical facility
Would only serve to dull the edge of Caesar's fame
—and yours.

The deeds of Mars and Diomed and other ancient
gory ones,
Are not for him who lacks the voice although he has
the will.
The battles I immortalize are chiefly amatory ones,
The wars, the struggles waged with arms that wound
but never kill.

TO CHLOË

Vitas inuleo me similis, Chloë, . . . Book I: Ode 23

Though all your charms in a sweet disarray,
Chloë, have won me, you shun me as though
I were a tiger that searches for prey,
I would not hurt you, your virtue is so
Glowing that passion is melted away.

As a lost fawn, wandered far as it could,
Starts at the breezes and freezes with fear
At the least sound from the ground where it stood;
Flies and escapes from the shapes that appear
And the whispering leaves in the murmurous wood,

So you evade me, my Chloë, and you
Daily dissemble; you tremble when I,
Singing your loveliness, tell what is true;
And, should I hold you or scold you, you fly
Out of my arms, like a bird to the blue!

I seek you and capture the ghost of a scent;
Though I pursue you, I woo you in vain.
Come, nights like these for dim courtships were meant,
When Love sings, half-breathless, the deathless refrain,
When dark willows call and the night-wind is spent.

TO CHLOË AGAIN

Vitas inuleo me similis, Chloë, . . . Book I: Ode 23

You shun me, Chloë, like a fawn
That, frightened, seeks its timorous mother,
Running this way and the other,
When familiar paths are gone;
Starting at the lightest breeze,
Or a bush stirred by a lizard,
Or when Spring, the gentle wizard,
Trembles in her knees.

Chloë, do not fear me so—
I am not a beast to scare you,
Not a lion that would tear you;
Do not treat me as a foe.
Chloë, leave your mother's side;
Come, you are a child no longer.
Make your faint desires stronger—
Be a bride.

"THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES"

Non vides quanto . . . Book III: Ode 20

Have you ever robbed a lioness of just one tiny whelp?
Have you ever felt the power of her claws?
Well, think of these, oh Pyrrhus, and before you cry for help,
Remember what a woman is—and pause.

The unfair sex, the one that is "more deadly than the male,"
Will never leave unturned a single stone,
She'll fight, she'll bite, she'll scorn the rules; she'll make a strong man pale . . .
So you'd better let Nearchus quite alone.

And meanwhile this Nearchus, the sweet and blushing prize,
Conducts himself as umpire of the fray;
He shakes his scented locks; he smirks and rolls his pretty eyes—
A tired semi-demi-god at play.

Oh let her have her perfumed youth—as she is sure to do,
Although she break a Senate-full of laws;
Admit defeat. Retreat from them—the virgin or the shrew.
Remember what a woman is—and pause.

QUESTIONING LYDIA

Lydia, dic, per omnis . . . Book I: Ode 8

Lydia, why do you ruin by lavishing
Smiles upon Sybaris, filling his eye
Only with love, and the skilfully ravishing
Lydia. Why?

Ringing his voice was; above all the clamorous
Throng in the play-ground his own would be high.
Now it is changed; he is softened and amorous.
Lydia, why?

Once he was blithe and, as swift as a linnet, he
Wrestled and swam, or on horse-back flew by.
Now he is dulled with this cursed femininity—
Lydia, why?

Yes, he is changed—he is moody and servile, he
Skulks like a coward and wishes to fly.
What, can you smile at his acting so scurvily,
Lydia? . . . Why?

ÉTUDE ON THE SAME THEME

Lydia, dic, per omnis . . . Book I: Ode 8

Lydia, I conjure you by all the gods above,
Tell me why you care to try to ruin Sybaris?
Why have you enraptured him and captured him with love?
Why have you inspired him and tired him with a kiss?

Tell me why he sits and sulks, and hates the sunny field?
He was not one to shun the sun, inured to dusty plains.
Why does he never ride beside his troop with spear and shield,
Nor curb his steed of Gallic breed with barbed and bitted reins?

Why does he dread the Tiber's stream, and hate the ringside oil?
He will not play; he throws away the quoits and javelin.
No longer flushed with triumph does he claim the victor's spoil;
He finds each game is much too tame; he does not aim to win.

Oh why do martial exercises fail to bring him joy?
And tell me why he languishes in anguish as they say
Achilles did when he was hid before the fall of Troy;
When he appeared disguised and weird as though he feared the fray.

THE PASSING OF LYDIA

Parcius iunctas quatiunt fenestras . . . Book I: Ode 25

No longer now do perfumed swains and merry wanton youths
Come flocking, loudly knocking at your gate;
No longer do they rob your rest, or mar the sleep that soothes,
With calling,—bawling love-songs until late.

No longer need you bar them out, nor is your window-pane
Ever shaken, now forsaken here you lie.
Nevermore will lute strings woo you, nor your lover's voice complain,
"'Tis a sin, dear, let me in, dear, or I die!"

The little door that used to swing so gaily in and out,
Creaks on hinges that show tinges of decay.
For you are old, my Lydia, you are old and rather stout;
Not the sort to court or sport with those who play.

Oh now you will bewail the daring insolence of rakes,
While you dally in an alley with the crones;
And the Thracian wind goes howling down the avenues and shakes
Your old shutters, as it utters mocking moans.

For youth will always call to youth and greet love with a will—
And Winter, though you tint her like the Spring,
Beneath the artificial glow she will be Winter still—
And who would hold so cold and old a thing!

REVENGE!

Audivere, Lyce . . . Book IV: Ode 13

The gods have heard me, Lyce,
The gods have heard my prayer.
Now you, who were so icy,
Observe with cold despair
Your thin and snowy hair.

Your cheeks are lined and sunken;
Your smiles have turned to leers;
But still you sing, a drunken
Appeal to Love, who hears
With inattentive ears.

Young Chia, with her fluty
Caressing voice compels.
Love lives upon her beauty;
Her cheeks, in which He dwells,
Are His fresh citadels.

He saw the battered ruin,
This old and twisted tree;
He marked the scars, and flew in
Haste that He might not see
Your torn senility.

No silks, no purple gauzes
  Can hide the lines that last.
Time, with his iron laws, is
  Implacable and fast.
  You cannot cheat the past.

Where now are all your subtle
  Disguises and your fair
Smile like a gleaming shuttle?
  Your shining skin, your rare
  Beauty half-breathless—where?

Only excelled by Cinara,
  Your loveliness ranked high.
You even seemed the winner, a
  Victor as years went by,
  And she was first to die.

But now—the young men lightly
  Laugh at your wrinkled brow.
The torch that burned so brightly
  Is only ashes now;
  A charred and blackened bough.

BY WAY OF PERSUASION

(WITH GENUFLECTIONS TO F. P. A.)

Est mihi nonum superantis annum . . . Book IV: Ode 11

Here, Phyllis, I've a jar of Alban wine,
Made of the choicest grapes that one can gather.
Vintage? I'll say its years are more than nine.
Inviting? . . . Rather.

And that's not all our well-known festive cheer—
There's ivy in the yard, and heaps of parsley.
Come, twine some in your hair—and look, old dear,
Don't do it sparsely.

The flat's all ready for the sacrifice;
In every corner handy to display it,
There's silver. Yes, the house looks extra nice,
If I *do* say it.

The flame has started trembling, and the smoke
Goes whirling upward with an eager rustling;
The household's overrun with busy folk.
Just see them hustling!

What's that? You want to know the cause of this?
Why, it's the birthday of old friend Maecenas;
And doubly dear because the season is
Sacred to Venus.

Some holiday? I'll tell the world that's right!
And—well, my Latin heart and soul are in it.
Therefore I hope you'll be on hand to-night.
Eh? . . . Just a minute.

Telephus? Pah! He isn't worth a thought.
If Telly dares neglect you, dear, why, let him!
He's nothing but a giddy good-for-naught—
Come and forget him.

Come, and permit your grief to be assuaged;
Forsake this flirt on whom you have your heart set.
Besides, Dame Rumor hath it he's engaged—
("One of our smart set.")

From hopes that fly too high and reckless dreams,
The doom of Phaëton's enough to scare you . . .
.This is—ahem—my favorite of themes;
But, dear, I spare you.

Come then, so that the evening may not lack
Your voice, that makes each heart a willing rover;
And, as we sing, black Care will grow less black—
Oh, come on over.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

Miserarum est . . . Book III: Ode 12

Alas, poor little maids who droop and pine.
Neither are you allowed to wear Love's crown
Nor drown
Your sorrow in sweet wine.

For ah, one learns to dread the family tongue;
The lashings of an uncle or an aunt,
One can't
Defy, however young.

Yet—there's a certain robber steals away
Your thoughts and busy needles; yes, I find
Your mind
Is not cast down, but gay!

Ah well, we're young, so I have heard, but once—
And Hebrus is a more than lucky man;
He can
Call himself blessed, the dunce.

But wait—Hebrus can hunt; his eye is true;
He rides and runs; he plants a well-aimed blow.
And so
Perhaps you're lucky too!

"HE WHO LAUGHS LAST—"

Nox erat et caelo . . . Epode 15

It was the very noon of night,
The stars were softly shining;
And radiant in the amorous light,
Your arms about me twining,
You swore, "While tempests goad the seas,
While wolf and sheep are enemies,
I will be yours, though Hades freeze
And Heaven starts declining."

Oh fair but still more fickle love,
Oh beautiful and blind one,
You are a maid unworthy of
A lover and a kind one.
Think you that Horace will give place
To him now wrapped in your embrace?
Nay, he will seek a fairer face
And, bless you, he will find one.

And as for him, whoe'er he be,
Who views my plight with laughter,
So wealthy that his granary
Is filled from pit to rafter,
He in his turn, as I of old,
Will watch your love grow strangely cold.
And all of this I shall behold—
And smile in silence after.

TO PYRRHA

Quis multa gracilis te puer in rosa
perfusus liquidis urget odoribus
grato, Pyrrha, sub antro? Book I: Ode 5

What dainty, perfume-scented youth, whenever he proposes,
Caresses you, oh Pyrrha, in a pleasant grot and fair;
For whom do you reveal your charms among a thousand roses?
For whom do you bedew your eyes and bind your shining hair?

Alas, how soon shall he deplore your perfidy, when lonely
He shall behold the altered gods, invisible to us,
Who now believes you his alone and who enjoys you only,
Who hopes (so credulous is he) things will be always thus.

Oh woe to those, the luckless ones, who cling to you, not knowing
Your faithlessness and folly—and to whom you seem so fair.
Lo, on the wall of Neptune's temple is a tablet showing
My votive offering tendered to the Sea-God with a prayer.

THE FICKLE LYDIA

Cum tu Lydia, Telephi
cervicem roseam, cerea Telephi . . . Book I: Ode 13

When you, my Lydia, praise the charms
  Of Telephus, and mark with pride
His rosy neck and waxen arms,
  My bitterness I cannot hide.
  My color, like the restless tide,
Rises in sudden wrath—and oh,
  The jealous tears of love denied
My agonizing torments show.

Nor can I see without a tear
  Your shoulders, scarred in Love's fierce play;
Nor look upon those lips for fear
  He, in his brutal passion, may
  Have marred the smile outshining day.
Your heart he rudely set astir,
  And stole the best of life away
From me, whose earth and sky you were.

Oh leave him; you will never find
  A lasting love in passion's rage.
Love should be gentle, tender, kind;

Love should give comfort, and assuage
The storms and ravages of age.
Such love is mine, that lives to be
Written in glory on the page
Whose words reflect eternity.

A BURLESQUE RONDO

Cum tu, Lydia, Telephi
cervicem roseam, cerea Telephi . . . Book I: Ode 13

Cum tu, Lydia . . . You know the rest—
Praising the waxen arms and breast
Of Telephus you drove me mad.
You made the sunniest moments sad,
While tortures racked my heaving chest.

Oh, I could see you softly dressed,
Inciting him with amorous zest;
And hear you whisper low, "My lad,
Come to Lydia."

Now you repent . . . Your arms protest
That they have been too roughly pressed.
Oh gain your senses; leave the cad,
And heed me as again I add:
Awake! Love is no giddy jest.
Come to! Lydia!

AN APPEAL

(IN RICHARD LE GALLIENNE'S MOST LIMPID MANNER)

Mater saeve Cupidinum
Thebanaeque iubet me Semelae puer . . . Book I: Ode 19

Mother of Cupids grown callous and cruel,
Young Dionysus with Pleasure's bright train,
Why do ye heap the faint flames with new fuel,
Why are my pulses on fire again?
Why this new joy and this exquisite pain?

Glycera, she who in brightness surpasses
Parian marble, whose lips have undone
Me with their petulant laughter—what lass is
Dazzling as she is, whose face is the sun!
Aye, 'tis to her that my fantasies run.

Now neither war nor its wild wonder fires me;
I cannot sing of the Parthian in flight.
Softly I chant, for when Venus inspires me,
Love is the one theme in which I delight;
Love is the music for mid-day and night.

Come, lads, and place on this turf as an altar,
Vervains and vessels of two-year-old wine.
Here shall I pray and with incense exalt her.
Then, when the sacrifice glows on the shrine,
She, being kinder, may come and be mine.

ODE AGAINST ANGER

O matre pulchra filia pulchrior
quem criminosis cumque voles modum
pones iambis. Book I: Ode 16

So my random rhymes displeased you,
  Loveliest of ladies; how
Wroth you are—to be appeased you
  Crave for vengeance, and your brow
  Clouds with reddening anger now.

Take the verses rude, erratic,
  (Which were never meant to pain)
Drown them in the Adriatic;
  Burn them, strew them o'er the plain—
  Only do not frown again.

Baleful anger, what can stay it?
  Neither flame nor sword nor sea.
Jove himself can not dismay it;
  It is powerful as he
  In its potent tyranny.

When Prometheus dared to fashion
  Man, by mingling worst and best
Of each beast, he took the passion
  Of the raging lion and pressed
  Anger in the human breast.

Rage is herald to perdition;
At its blast the city falls.
Armies suffer demolition,
While the foe, whom naught appals,
Drives his plowshares through the walls.

Clear your forehead. Anger frantic
Works but ill, and fiercer than
Storms and tumults Corybantic
Is the savage wrath of man.
Curb it, lady, when you can.

I myself, when young, was given
To the swift iambic verse
And, with reckless ardor driven,
I would often intersperse
Satires with a careless curse.

Now I turn to dull excuses—
Come and be my friend once more.
I recant my rhymed abuses,
Hoping that you will restore
Your affection . . . as before.

MUTINY

Iam veris comites . . . Book IV: Ode 12

Spring's mild companion calms the seas,
  The wind blows up from Thrace;
The huddled hills that used to freeze
  Shake off the cold embrace.
The seedling stirs; the roots are squirming;
And every bird is early-worming.

On soft young grass, the fattening sheep
  Are tended by musicians
Who do their best to pipe and leap
  According to traditions,
And chant their vernal panegyric
As shepherds do in every lyric.

"The year's at"—well, the thirsting time:
  The trees suck up their sap;
The sun drinks on his lengthening climb;
  The wine of love's on tap.
The earth's one sparkling ebullition . . .
This is no place for prohibition!

Come and forget the parching laws;
  Away with dry excuses!
You shall espouse a heavenly Cause
  With more than earthly juices!
Their genial glow shall make it warmer
For you—and any chance informer.

Come, for these interdicted jars
  Will droop until you've kissed 'em;
Come and behold more brilliant stars
  Than in the solar system.
Fools keep to wisdom in these glum times;
The wiser man forgets it—sometimes.

HOLIDAY

Festo quid potius die . . . Book III: Ode 28

What celebration should there be? . . .
  Quick, Lyde, bring a jar!
Against a dull sobriety
  We'll wage a lusty war.

The festive sun is setting low,
  The dusk is almost there;
And yet you scarcely move, as though
  We both had time to spare!

Let's pour the wine and sing in turns
  Of Neptune in his lair,
Of mermaids in the water-ferns,
  And of their sea-green hair.

And you, upon your curving lyre,
  Shall spend a tuneful hour,
Singing Diana's darts of fire
  And her benignant power.

Hymns shall arise to Her who sends
  Fresh laughter and delight,
Until our weary singing ends
  In lullabies to night.

TO A FAUN

Faune, Nympharum . . . Book III: Ode 18

You sprightly mischief dancing by,
As you pursue the nymphs that fly
From your embraces,
Run lightly through my garden plot,
Respect the flower-beds that dot
My favorite places;
Avoiding please the early peas while going
through your paces.

Be gentle to the pigs and sows,
The horses, chickens, ducks and cows;
Pray, don't alarm them.
And treat each tender, youngling kid
With comradeship, as if you did
Not want to harm them.
They'll frisk and how their heads will bow if
you should pass and charm them!

For you there shall be sacrificed
The herd's unblemished, highest-priced
And best example.
Incense shall cloud the festive shrine
And there shall be great bowls of wine
For you to sample—
Providing all the while, of course, my grounds
you do not trample.

And now, to celebrate your day,
Cattle romp and shepherds play
For flocks to gambol.
The world throws off its sordid shams
And no one works while wolf and lambs
Together amble.
The village goes to tear its clothes on rustic bush and bramble.

The town turns out, a giddy rout:
Lodger, landlord, lover, lout,
Prince and pastor.
While laborers who dig or till,
Dance with passion, leaping still
Higher, faster.
Striking the earth, their enemy, to show they are its master!

AFTERMATH

Intermissa, Venus . . . Book IV: Ode 1

Venus, I pray, do not flay me or tear me now;
Why should you rouse me to passion again?
I am too old to let Cupid ensnare me now;
See, there are hundreds of likelier men.
Spare me, oh spare me now!

Venus, go otherwhere; pass on and pardon me;
I am no longer the man that I was.
Thoughts of poor Cynara rise like a guard on me,
These and my fiftieth year make me pause—
Do not be hard on me.

Young Paulus Maximus, *he* is the man for you;
High-born and fair, with an eloquent turn.
He is the sort who will do all he can for you;
Altars he'll raise to you, incense he'll burn;
Fires he'll fan for you.

Sweetly the smoke of his worship will rise to you,
And, twice a day, nimble feet will advance—
Maidens and boys, as a pleasant surprise to you,
Beating the ground in the Salian dance,
While the heart flies to you . . .

Yes, I have altered. The sighs and alarms for me,
Little indeed do I think of them now.
Wine-cups and drinking-bouts—these have no
charms for me;
I crave no flowers to bind on my brow,
No, nor soft arms for me.

But—what is this! Can you tell, Ligurine dear,
Why in my dreams do our hands interclasp?
Or, like a hunter in chase of a shiny deer,
Why do I seek you, who fly from my grasp?
And—why this briny tear?

RAILING AT ICCIUS

Icci, beatis nunc Arabum invides
gazis . . . Book I: Ode 29

Oh Iccius, now you would possess
  Arabian wealth and foreign treasures,
And so you have prepared to press
Decisive war against—no less
Than those dread Saban kings; confess
    These are impulsive measures.
  Now you are fashioning with speed
  Chains for the formidable Mede!

What virgin, what barbarian fair,
  When you have slain her lord and lover,
Will be your slave? With perfumed hair,
What stripling from the court will bear
The golden cups of wine; and there,
    To keep you safely under cover,
Will guard you well from every foe
With arrows from his father's bow?

Oh rivers now may run uphill,
  And Tiber's course become erratic,
If for Iberian arms you will
Exchange your philosophic skill,

Panaetius' works, and those that fill
Your library Socratic . . .
Alas, your faithful friends, though few,
Expected better things of you.

PANTOUM OF PROCRASTINATION

Mollis inertia . . . Epode 14

Why this inertia, you ask,
  Sensing my mental disorder.
Why don't I finish the task,
  Writing a poem to order?

Sensing my mental disorder,
  Seeing the way I put off
Writing a poem to order,
  I do not wonder you scoff.

Seeing the way I put off,
  (Laugh as you will, doubting Thomas)
I do not wonder you scoff—
  Yet there's a reason, I promise.

Laugh as you will, doubting Thomas,
  I will not ask you to pause.
Yet—there's a reason, I promise—
  A god, and a small one's the cause.

I will not ask you to pause
  Here in my comfortless hour;
A god, and a small one's the cause—
  Yes, you yourself know his power,

Here, in my comfortless hour,
  Cupid plays tricks with my voice.
Yes, you yourself know his power,
  Only—you've cause to rejoice.

Cupid plays tricks with my voice;
  Jeers at the poem's beginning—
Only *you've* cause to rejoice,
  Your love is faithful and winning.

Jeers at the poem's beginning . . .
  "Why don't I finish the task?"
Your love is faithful and winning.
  "Why this inertia?" . . . You ask!

HORACE EXPLAINS

Martiis caelebs . . . Book III: Ode 8

Why, you ask, this festive raiment, why the bright
regalia?
Why the smoking censer and the decorated urn?
Why should I, a bachelor, observe the Matronalia?
Ah, my friend Maecenas, you have something still
to learn.

Many years ago to-day, before I was your laureate,
I lay beneath a branch and thought of nothing much
at all;
To be precise, I think I scanned the latest Snappy
Storiette,
When suddenly the senseless tree made up its mind
to fall.

Pinned upon the rocky ground I spent a far from jolly
day.
"Help!" I cried, at intervals from one o'clock to
eight.
There and then I swore to keep this date a sacred
holiday
If, I added tearfully, I live to celebrate.

So let's keep the oath I made with reverence and piety.
Here's a cask of Caecuban to nurse me back to health.
Let the city's counselors grow sodden with sobriety;
Here's a richer business and a greater common wealth.

Come then, my Maecenas, bring the sunshine of your presence here.
Toast your friend's recovery and wish him many more.
Join me in a happy, not too rapid convalescence here.
Carpe diem . . . But you've heard the rest of this before.

AN INVITATION

Velox amoenum saepe Lucretilem . . . Book I: Ode 17

From Grecian pine and precipice
The nimble Faunus often strays,
And here, beside Lucretilis,
He lingers for a space of days.
Here he will keep
My goats and sheep
From chilling winds and Summer's blaze.

For hidden strawberries and thyme
The women seek in safety here;
While sportive kids undaunted climb
The mountain-side without a fear
Of wolves or snakes,
When Faunus makes
Sweet music to delight the ear.

Aye, all the gods are good to me,
And shielded by their gifts I dwell;
They love me for my piety,
And all my songs have pleased them well.
Sweet is my rest
For I am blest
With bounties more than I can tell.

Come hither. In this cool retreat
You too shall share this treasure trove.
Here shall you flee the dog-star's heat;
Here shall you learn how, torn with love,
Penelope
In rivalry
With Circe for a lover strove.

Here shall you drink from Grecian jars
Mild Lesbian wine, still sweet and warm,
Nor fear that Bacchus clash with Mars,
Nor savage Cyrus do you harm.
So come, my friend,
With me and spend
Some days upon the Sabine farm.

WINTER PIECE

Vides ut alta stet nive candidum
Soracte . . . Book I: Ode 9

Shrouded with ice and snow
Soracte stands in splendor.
The rivers freeze; the slender
Branches are weighted low.

Oh Thaliarchus mine,
Come, set the fagots flaming
And then, with rapt acclaiming,
Bring in the Sabine wine.

The rest leave to the gods
Who rule the warring thunders,
Whose hands shape Life's deep wonders
And Death's more puzzling odds.

We only live to-day;
Youth knows no dull to-morrow.
We who have buried Sorrow
May dance when we are gray.

Look,—now the maidens seek
Dim walks, and breathe soft whispers
To scented youths, and this spurs
The love that fears to speak.

Coy smiles and feigned alarms
The maiden, half-resisting,
Yields of a sudden, twisting
The token from her arms.

One hears a plaintive tune;
A snatch of distant laughter . . .
Vague murmurs pass, and after
Is silence—and the moon.

INVOCATION

Dianam tenerae dicite virgines . . . Book I: Ode 21

Maidens young and virgins tender,
Sing Diana in her splendor;
Boys at play within the hollow,
Sing the flowing-haired Apollo.

(Ye that, moved by love and duty,
Praise Diana's holy beauty,
Shall be granted joys unceasing
And, perhaps, a mate that's pleasing.)

(And if winning words we hit on,
Phoebus may present the Briton,
Persian, Parthian and the rest, with
All the wars and plagues *we're* blessed with.)

THE PINE TREE FOR DIANA

Montium custos . . . Book III: Ode 22

Oh virgin queen of mountain-side and woodland,
Blessèd protector of young wives in travail,
Who snatchest them from death if thrice they call
thee—
Goddess and guardian;

To thee I dedicate this slender pine-tree;
And each year with a boar's blood I shall bless it—
A youngling boar just dreaming of his first thrust,
Savage and sidelong.

A PLEASANT VOYAGE FOR MAEVIUS

Mala soluta . . . Epode 10

Under an evil star she slips,
Accompanied by my hate;
She reels, unluckiest of ships,
With him, her stinking freight.

Do not forget, O southwest wind,
To lash her sides with waves,
Till Maevius sees, before, behind,
Nothing but yawning graves.

Litter the sea, till on it lie
These oars and tattered ropes;
And make the breakers tower as high
As mountains on his hopes.

Let not one friendly star appear,
Let even days be dark;
So that he'll fare as calm and clear
—As Ajax' impious bark!

Ah, how the mariners will sweat!
How Maevius will pale!
As weeping, woman-like and wet,
He prays to stop the gale.

I too shall pray! And if a rock
Receive his mangled form,
The choicest ewe-lamb of the flock
I'll offer to the storm.

SIMPLICITY

Persicos odi, puer . . . Book I: Ode 38

The diversions of the Persians with their ostentatious ways
Do not thrill me, for they fill me with disdain;
I abominate the dominating style of coarse displays,
And from garlands brought from far lands I refrain.

But the myrtle plain and fertile you may bind around your brow,
And in future let it suit your taste like mine.
Come, my fervent little servant, you may place it on me now,
As with wine here I recline here near the vine.

VICTORIAN SIMPLICITY

(À LA ANDREW LANG)

I do not love this pomp and pride
Extolled by Persians magnified
  With self-esteem; and to my taste
  The linden chaplets interlaced
With roses should be cast aside.

Seek not the place where these abide;
Those perfumed robes and wreaths applied
  With brilliant gauds and gems misplaced,
    I do not love.

But bring the jars; beneath the wide,
Green mantle of these boughs I'll hide.
  Come, bind my brow with myrtle chaste
  And bring—oh, anything—but haste!
For there's no wine I ever tried
    I do not love.

NEAPOLITAN SIMPLICITY

(T. A. DALY PUTS IT IN HIS FAVORITE DIALECT)

My frand, I am seeck, an' I talla you w'at,
Dees grandness, eet maka me—w'at you call—hot!
See, roses an' ribbons all ovra da place;
I tal you, my frand, eet ees bigga deesgrace.

Oh my! soocha fooleeshness geeve me a pain.
Com' back to Italia's sweetness again!
An' Rosa, weeth myrtle-leaves steeck 'een her hair,
Gon' breeng da Chianti for dreenk weeth us dere.

SEDITIOUS SONG AGAINST PROHIBITION

(WITH AN INTERPOLATED AND WHOLLY AD LIB. CHORUS)

O nata mecum . . . Book III: Ode 21

I

When Manlius was consul, when you and I were young,
This ancient wine was born of precious juices;
Of Caecuban and Massic grapes, of various and classic grapes,
'Twas made for happy days and noble uses.

CHORUS

So wine, wine, wine till the planets reel and fall;
Yellow wine and mellow wine or any wine at all.
The happy earth has put her mirth and courage in the vine;
And Love and Laughter follow after wine.

II

So highly do we prize it that no man dare despise it,
Though cynical he may be or Socratic.
They say that even Cato old declared it ne'er too late to hold
A cup of wine to make the heart ecstatic.

CHORUS

So wine, wine, wine, etc.

III

For wine's divine emulsion creates a sweet compulsion,
It lifts the weak above complaint or pity;
It makes him raise his horn again and Hope and
Strength are born again—
It turns the witty wise, the wise man witty!

CHORUS

So wine, wine, wine, etc.

IV

It rids the soul of languor, of sorrow, fear and anger;
While Bacchus joins the feast to make it splendid.
And Venus and the Graces hear our songs and take
their places here,
With night-long lamps until the revel's ended.

CHORUS

So wine, wine, wine till the planets reel and fall;
Yellow wine and mellow wine or any wine at all.
The happy earth has put her mirth and courage in
the wine;
And Love and Laughter follow after wine!

HORACE, TEMPERANCE ADVOCATE

Nullam, Vare, sacra vite prius severis arborem . . .
Book I: Ode 18

When you start your planting, Varus,
Let your first thought be the vine;
Knowing how its powers spare us
When our cares and doubts combine,
Knowing how the fears that snare us
Vanish with the use of wine.

Wine is cheering and sustaining;
Thoughts of harm and dreams of war
In the cups that we are draining
Fade away and, as we pour
Wine anew, our cares are waning—
Poverty is felt no more.

Yet with all your deep potations,
Check the overpowering thirst;
Do not quaff with wild impatience—
Moderate your passion first.
Bear in mind the brutal Thracians,
Even by great Pan accursed.

When their passions have been fired,
  Armed with wine and roused with song,
They will fight as if inspired
  With mad fury, and ere long
Gain the thing that they desired,
  Caring naught for right or wrong.

Never will I rouse thee, Bacchus,
  'Gainst thy will as in the past.
Cease thy cymbals, then, that rack us;
  Hush thy trumpets' brazen blast,
For they make false Pride attack us
  And the Faith that does not last.

TRITE TRIOLETS

Tu ne quaesieris . . . Book I: Ode 11

Ask not—what does it matter—
How long we're going to live;
The fortune-teller's patter
Ask not. What does it matter
If Jove has years to scatter
Or only one to give? . . .
Ask not. What does it matter
How long we're going to live!

Oh friend, trust no to-morrow,
But seize the flying present.
Would you escape all sorrow,
Oh friend? Trust no to-morrow!
Drink deep, and do not borrow
One thought that isn't pleasant.
Oh friend, trust no to-morrow,
But seize the flying present.

ON PRIDE, POSITION, POWER, ETC.

Nullus argento color est . . . Book II: Ode 2

Silver hidden in the mine
Does not shine.
Though no soul on earth refuse it,
  Gold grows either bright or sordid
By the way a man may use it;
  It grows dull when hoarded.
All the coins a miser owns
Might as well be stones.

He rules with power over pelf
Who rules himself.
Libyan shores and Carthaginian,
  Realms whose length may well dismay us,
Who conquers Greed has such dominion—
  Look at Proculeius.
All the years the gods may give,
Deeds like his outlive.

What's a title, what's a crown?
Virtue laughs them down.
And to him alone she offers
  Wreaths and things that grow no older

Who can gaze on golden coffers,
  Gaze—and shrug his shoulder.
The happy man wants no one's throne—
He has his own!

THE GOLDEN MEAN

Rectius vives . . . Book II: Ode 10

Licinius, here's a recipe
  To keep you from undue commotion,
Remember that the shore can be
  As treacherous as the depths of ocean:

The man who loves the golden mean,
  Avoids the squalor of a hovel;
And scorns the palaces, serene
  Above the envious ones who grovel.

It is the giant pine that creaks,
  It is the tallest towers that tumble;
And it is on the mountain peaks
  That lightnings strike and heavens crumble.

The heart forearmed, when times are drear,
  Hopes for the best, and in fair weather
Allows itself an hour of fear—
  It takes the good and bad together.

Be patient then, and reef your sails;
  Equip your courage with endurance.
Thus shall you meet the roaring gales
  With laughing wisdom and assurance.

CIVIL WAR

Quo, quo scelesti ruitis? . . . Epode 7

Why do ye rush, oh wicked folk,
To a fresh war?
Again the cries, the sword, the smoke—
What for?

Has not sufficient precious blood
Been fiercely shed?
Must ye spill more until ye flood
The dead?

Not even armed in rivalry
Your hate's employed;
But 'gainst yourselves until ye be
Destroyed!

Even when beasts slay beasts, they kill
Some other kind.
Can it be madness makes ye still
So blind?

Make answer! Is your conscience numb?
Each ashy face
Admits, with silent lips, the dumb
Disgrace.

Murder of brothers! Of all crime,
Vilest and worst!
Pause—lest ye be, through all of time,
Accursed.

LUGUBRIOUS VILLANELLE OF PLATITUDES

Eheu fugaces, Postume . . . Book II: Ode 14

Ah Postumus, my Postumus, the years are slipping by;
Old age with hurrying footsteps draws nearer day by day;
And we will leave this friendly earth and every friendlier tie.

Soon Death, whose strength is never spent, whose sword is always high,
Will beckon us, and all our faith will win us no delay.
Ah Postumus, my Postumus, the years are slipping by.

Grim Pluto waits for all of us; he waits with pitiless eye,
Until we journey down the stream that carries us away;
And we will leave this friendly earth and every friendlier tie.

Though we be kings or worse than slaves, the eager moments fly;
Though we be purer than the gods, Time will not halt or stay—
Ah Postumus, my Postumus, the years are slipping by.

Aye, we must go, though we have shunned the red sun
of July,
The bitter winds, the treacherous surf, the blind and
savage fray,
And we will leave this friendly earth and every friend-
lier tie.

Too soon the stubborn hand of Fate tears all our
dreams awry;
Too soon the plowman quits his plow, the child
his happy play—
Ah Postumus, my Postumus, the years are slipping by,
And we will leave this friendly earth and every friend-
lier tie.

AN INFAMOUS RENDERING

(The Parentheses and Italics being the Translator's)

O fons Bandusiae . . . Book III: Ode 13

Bandusian Spring, I've known thee long (*in various translations*)
And now at last I sing of thee; (*with anything but patience*)
Worthy of wine and flowers, (*like a hackneyed "Hymn to Victory"*)
Brilliant as glass. (*A metaphor both trite and contradictory.*)

To-morrow shall a kid be thine, (*a spring with butchered goats on it!*)
His blood shall dye thy crystal stream; (*and Horace simply gloats on it.*)
On thee the dog-star's hour of rage (*that part was never clear to me*)
Shall lay no hand. (*In fact this ode, though famed, is far from dear to me.*)

Thou givest freely of thy wealth (*a feeling I don't share at all*)
To all who seek thy cooling side; (*yet, somehow, I don't care at all*)

The bull that's wearied of the plow, (*" and I, for one, don't blame him";*)
The sheep that's strayed. (*And, entre nous, the fox that's sure to claim him.*)

Thou too shalt rank with famous founts, (*you note how Horace hates himself*)
For I shall be thy laureate; (*thus modestly he rates himself;*)
I will immortalize thy rocks, (*and now the light that glowed is dun*)
Thy babbling streams. (*And, thank the Lord, the babbling with this Ode is done!*)

PROLOG IN THE APPROVED MANNER

(TO MAECENAS)

Maecenas atavis edite regibus . . . Book I: Ode 1

Lordly descendant of a royal line,
Whose love and honored patronage is mine,
Know you not how the varied types of men
Struggle, each with his own desires, and then
Count themselves kings—yes, gods are not more
blessed—
If by some trick of fate they pass the rest.

This man exults if fortune sweep him high
Where he may swagger in the public eye;
Another hopes to magnify his stores
With grain swept from the Libyan threshing-
floors.
He who delights to till his fertile fields
Is most concerned with what the farming yields
And would not change for things more hazardous,
Though tempted with the wealth of Attalus.
The merchant, dreading winds and angry seas,
Commends tranquillity and rural ease;
Another one (you may have heard of such)
Is not averse to Massic, and will touch

The lips of jars that hold it while he may;
Draining and dreaming through the longest day.
One quaffs it lying by some sacred stream,
Another stretched on roses loved to dream. . . .

The camp, the sound of trumpets as they blend
With clarions and cries, with wars that rend
A thousand mothers' hearts with fresh despair,
Are things for which a nation seems to care.
The huntsman, deaf to his neglected spouse,
Creeps in the cold and shuns his own warm house,
Whether by dogs a hart is held to view,
Or some wild Marsian boar has broken through
The fine-wrought net which he has torn askew.

For me the ivy, emblem that I love,
Ranks me an equal with the gods above.
For me the placid groves and cool retreats
Where never throngs disturb the woodland streets,
But where the Nymphs and Satyrs dancing light
Add a new glory to the splendid night.
These will I sing until my battered lute
Is still and Polyhymnia's lyre is mute.
Thus will I seek for favor in your eyes,
And if with lyric bards you say I rise
My head shall grow until it scrapes the skies.

SPRING SUMMONS

Solvitur acris hiems grata vice veris . . . Book I: Ode 4

When breezes kiss the lips of Spring,
And ships again at anchor ride,
The plowman leaves his hearth to sing
And wander through the countryside,
Where daisies glow
Like drifts of snow,
And fields below are white and wide.

At night the playful moonbeams dance
With Venus and her rosy train;
The kiss of flute and lyre enchants
The Nymphs upon each mossy plain,
Whose feet repeat
The rhythmic beat
And help complete the magic strain.

Come then, this is the joyous time,
The time beloved by god and man;
Awake, this is the glad year's prime;
Awake and, in the name of Pan,
Anoint with wine
The sacred shrine
Where wreaths entwine the gift we plan.

Live well to-day. Time will not wait,
Nor Death the slightest favor show
At hovel or the castle-gate.
And when thine hour striketh—lo,
The light shall pass . . .
No more the glass
Nor lad nor lass for thee shall glow.

THE MODEST HOST

Vile potabis modicis Sabinum
cantharis . . . Book I: Ode 20

These cups of mine are neither large nor rare,
My joys are simple; humble, too, my fare.
That day the theater hailed thee with a sign
Of wildest welcome, this poor Sabine wine,
In Grecian casks, I did myself prepare.

Yet though, my patron knight, thou mayest with prayer
Extol the seasoned Caecuban and swear
To touch no poorer wine; do not decline
These cups of mine.

And though my cellar-shelves are always bare
Of sweet Falernian, and the vessels there
Contain weak juices that may seem like brine
When tasted after vintages like thine—
Come, dear Maecenas; come, and dare to share
These cups of mine.

THE WARRIOR RETURNS

Et ture et fidibus iuvat
placare . . . Book I: Ode 36

Now see the sacrifice leap up to heaven,
Greeting the gods as their vision is thrilled;
Hear what new songs to the lyre are given,
While the warm blood of a heifer is spilled.
Even the dumb things their gladness are voicing;
For from the ultimate limits of Spain
Numida comes to the sounds of rejoicing,
Comes to his home and his comrades again

Come then, bring the jars
Full of bubbling glories;
Let us shake the stars
With our songs and stories.
Pour the laughing wine
Borne by this Liburnian;
Mix with Surrentine,
Massic and Falernian.

Let the jocund dance
Cease not till the morning,
And let wreaths enhance
Nature's own adorning.

Where the parsley shows,
  Strew the daffodilly;
Lavishing the rose
  And the short-lived lily.

Feast your swimming eyes
  On this floral palace
And its fairest prize,
  The divine Damalis.
Lo, how soft she sings
  In this leafy cover,
And like ivy clings
  To her latest lover . . .

Now see the sacrifice leap up to heaven,
  Greeting the gods as their vision is thrilled;
Hear what new songs to the lyre are given
  While the warm blood of a heifer is spilled.
Even the dumb things their gladness are voicing;
  For from the ultimate limits of Spain
Numida comes to the sounds of rejoicing,
  Comes to his home and his comrades again!

THE TOAST

Natis in usum laetitiae scyphis
pugnare Thracem est . . . Book I: Ode 27

To brawl and quarrel over wine
And, drugged with dissipation,
To strike in anger, and decline
The toast is rude, is base,—in fine,
It's downright Thracian.

Let songs uncurl the scornful lip;
Let verses, light or classic,
Regale the board; let dancers trip . . .
Here, try these peacock's tongues, and sip
This rare old Massic.

Come, toast the one that rules your heart;
A truce to idle lying.
Blessed are the wounds that ache and smart
When some fair Chloë speeds the dart
Of which you're dying.

Who needs excuse his love or make
Apologies for passion?
The heavy bonds that none can break
I weave in pleasing chains; so take
Yours in this fashion.

Come then, her name. What! Is it *she*? . . .
Alas, my lad, I fear a
Fate will be yours none dare foresee.
What god can save you, set you free
From this chimera!

CLEOPATRA'S DEATH

Nunc est bibendum . . . Book I: Ode 37

Now let us drink and tread the earth
With dancing mirth.
Now, comrades, let us open up
The rare wine stored away so long,
And raise, with many a glowing cup,
A thankful and victorious song.

A short time since all men had seen
The Ethiop Queen
Plotting to rule on land and sea;
Sending fresh ships on every wave,
To flood fair Rome with savagery
And turn the Empire to a grave.

But soon her madness was dispelled.
Her hopes were quelled
When all her ships went up in flame
And Caesar, giving swift pursuit,
Brought back her reason as she came
Nearer the shores she left to loot.

Hot as the hunter out to stalk
The hare; or hawk
After a pigeon, Caesar swept
To make his triumph greater still.
But, scorning chains, she never wept
Or shrank from her majestic will.

She smiled at death and dared to grasp
The deadly asp.
Ruined and lost, she never mourned;
She let the poison have its way.
Unqueened, she kept her throne, and scorned
To make a Roman holiday.

THE GHOST OF ARCHYTAS

(IN PROFESSOR CONINGTON'S STRICTEST MANNER)

Te maris et terrae numeroque carentis arenae . . .
Book I: Ode 28

A SAILOR SPEAKS:

Oh you who circled every sea
  Who knew each mile of foreign strand,
Oh, Archytas, and can it be
  That for the lack of grains of sand,
  Your soul from Heaven's realm is banned
To haunt the shore eternally.
  Aye, though in life your spirit flew
    In fancy over earth and sky,
  What good was it, since even you
      Were doomed to die.

And thus did Pelops' father lie—
  He who was Heaven's favored guest;
And thus Tithonus faced the sky
  Although Aurora loved him best;
  And Minos, though he was possessed
Of Jove's own secrets, lived to die.
  Aye, in some bleak Tartarean hole,
    The son of Panthous is confined—
  Of what avail his warlike soul,
      His noble mind?

The selfsame night awaits us all;
The road of Death all mortals tread.
On fields of carnage many fall,
The sport and toy of Mars, the dread;
Others in ocean caves lie dead.
For, in a mingled funeral,
The young and old together lie;
No mortal cheats the fates—not one;
Proserpine's all-watchful eye
Is blind to none.

THE SHADE REPLIES:

The South wind, warm Orion's mate,
Has sunk me 'neath th'Illyrian wave,
And here in this unhallowed state
I seek the comfort of a grave.
Oh scatter sand on me and save
My spirit ere it be too late.
So shall your soul be comforted
And ne'er a wind shall do you harm,
But blessings be upon your head
While you lie warm.

So shall you profit by the winds
And reap what fortunes you may please;
For he who has Jove's favor finds
The love of Neptune on the seas.
But do not flout these obsequies

Or you will blast your children's minds;
For such a grave iniquity
No expiation can atone . . .
So sprinkle sand thrice over me—
And then begone.

TO THE (ROMAN) SHIP OF STATE

O navis, referent in mare te novi
fluctus! O quid agis? . . . Book I: Ode 14

Proud Ship, the waves and winds conspire
To drag you back to sea.
O, gain the port that we desire;
Ride swiftly, lest you be

A hopeless wreck; for even now
Devoid of oars you sail,
Your mast is bent and weak (a blow
Dealt by a foreign gale).

And see the signs that from each spar
A dire destruction spell:
Your sails in tattered ribbons are
That catch the breezes' swell.

Your keel shows lines of swift decay;
Your cables all are bare;
No gods are left to whom you may
Turn with a frenzied prayer.

Of Pontic pine, you boast, you came,
Reared in a noble wood;
Think you that *this* will ever tame
The tempest's angry mood?

'Tis little courage sailors find
In neatly-painted boats.
Beware then, lest the howling wind
Hurls back the boastful notes.

Oh, You who are my grief and care,
Turn back to calmer seas.
Beware, oh precious Ship, beware
The shining Cyclades.

TO MERCURY

Mercuri, facunde nepos Atlantis . . . Book I: Ode 10

Bright grandson of old Atlas, thrice-eloquent of tongue,
  Who raised the early races by the graces of your art,
With oratory noble and the splendid gift of song,
  Who wrought a thousand wonders and reformed the savage heart,

I sing of you, light messenger of Jove and all the gods—
  The parent of the lyre and the higher lord of theft;
Who smiles on his disciples, and in spite of all the odds,
  Who seizes what he pleases and then smiles when nothing's left.

Once when you were a little boy, Apollo in a rage,
  (His oxen having vanished as though banished from the sun)
Knowing your mischiefs, threatened you, not thinking of your age,
  Then of a sudden stopped and laughed—his quiver too had gone!

And it was you whose guidance and whose mighty power led
The wealthy Priam when he left the many walls of Troy;
Deceived the sons of Atreus and saved his hoary head
By stealing through the camp which Trojans never could destroy.

You are companion to the soul, conductor of the dead;
The evil spirits cower at the power of your rod;
The airy throngs to soft abodes eternally are led
By you, who are the favorite of each and every god.

TO VIRGIL

Quis desiderio sit pudor aut modus
tam cari capitis? . . . Book I: Ode 24

O weep and wail—there is no shame in weeping.
What bounds can measure grief for one so dear?
Melpomene, arise, thy wild harp sweeping
And teach me songs of sadness and the bier.

And does Quintilius sleep eternal slumbers?
O Justice, pious Modesty, and Fear—
Intrepid Truth, though Life has valiant numbers,
When shall ye ever hope to find his peer?

Aye, though he died, amid a throng lamentous,
By none, my Virgil, better wept than you,
In vain you ask him back; he was not lent us
On any terms but what the gods endue.

Aye, though you strike the lyre with wilder sobbing
And sweeter sighs than Orpheus of Thrace,
You cannot set one drop of life-blood throbbing
Or bring one blush to that poor, pallid face.

For Mercury, impervious to stations,
Cannot reverse the fates that placed him there;
And though the blow is deep, 'twill heal with patience.
For what we cannot change we learn to bear.

TO VENUS

O Venus, regina Cnidi Paphique . . . Book I: Ode 30

Come Venus, Cnidian-Paphian queen,
  Leave Cyprus for a while,
And haste where Glycera may be seen
Invoking thee with incense, e'en
  To win thy smile.

Bring Cupid and the Graces three
  To fan thy fires,
Ungirdled Nymphs, and Mercury—
And buoyant Youth that, without thee,
  No maid desires.

TO HIS LYRE

Poscimur. Si quid vacui sub umbra
lusimus tecum . . . Book I: Ode 32

Now we are called upon. O lyre,
If ever we in secret here
Have sung one strain that men admire
And may outlive the passing year,
I pray thee tune the throbbing wire
From which my dearest songs have flowed,
And let me build for my desire
A Latin ode.

A Lesbian poet showed us first
Thy passion and thy fluent power;
And in the battle's lust and thirst,
Or quiet of the calmer hour,
He swept the silent strings; he versed
The lovely Venus in her pride;
Or showed us Cupid being nursed
Close at her side.

He chanted Bacchus wondrously;
  And, when the Muses' praise was sung,
Extolled the black-eyed Lycus, he
  Who was so delicate and young . . .
O thou who art and e'er wilt be
  The charm and the delight of all,
Come and be gracious unto me—
    Answer the call.

TO APOLLO

Quid dedicatum poscit Apollinem
vates? . . . Book I: Ode 31

Lord of all the lyrists, hear the poet's supplication.
See, before the temple that is hallowed in thy sight,
From the flowing flagon I will pour the first libation;
Phoebus, Lord Apollo, hear my fervid prayer aright.

Grant me neither goodly crops from fertile, far Sardinia,
Nor the wealth of countless herds from scorched Calabrian strands,
Ivory from Indian caskets, gold from Carthaginia,
Nor the towns where silently the Liris lips the sands.

Let the favored nobles who to Fortune are beholden
For their purple vineyards prune them with a crooked knife;
Let the wealthy merchants drink from goblets carved and golden;
Grant me but the boon of living; let me know the strength of life.

Let me walk unto the end, erect, with brow unclouded;
Let my years be sonant with the sweeping of the lyre.
And, when I am less than dust and all the urns are shrouded,
May the singing echo even when the songs expire.

A COMPLACENT RONDEAU REDOUBLE

Musis amicus tristitiam et metus
tradam protervis in mare . . . Book I: Ode 26

The Muses love me, and I am content,
For naught to me is either grief or fear;
The winds will sweep them into banishment,
The sea will drag them to a briny bier.

Let others quail and, trembling, force the tear,
And cringe, with looks that on the ground are bent;
Let all the angry powers of earth appear,
The Muses love me—and I am content.

What though the days of joy are only lent,
What though the skies are overcast and drear;
I care not if the thundering heavens be rent,
For naught to me is either grief or fear.

Come then, bright-hearted nymph from brooklets clear,
A garland for my Lamia weave; nor vent
Thy proud disdain upon my verses here—
The winds will sweep them into banishment.

O, come with perfumed words from Venus sent
And twine a golden couplet for our cheer.
(Mind not the cares that mar our merriment;
The sea will drag them to a briny bier).

Attune my strings and so, for many a year,
Singing of thee I will be diligent;
And even when the leaves of life are sere,
One thought will cheer me when all else is spent:
The Muses love me.

HALF IN EARNEST

Exegi monumentum aere perennius . . . Book III: Ode 30

My work is done, a monument sublime,
A thing outliving brass;
One that the pyramids cannot surpass,
Untouched by the corroding rains of Time.

The flight of ages, the parade of years,
Will gently pass me by;
For, buried though I be, I cannot die—
I shall escape the death-bed's final fears.

Fresh with each generation's lavish praise
My work and I shall grow,
Until at last the world of men will know
The living magic of these deathless lays.

Until at last they recognize in me
One of the first to give
Soul to the lyric, stuff to make it live . . .
So come and crown me, O Melpomene.

"I CELEBRATE MYSELF"

Non usitata nec tenui ferar . . . Book II: Ode 20

Before I end this glorious batch
  Of deathless verses, friend Maecenas,
I've something still to add, to snatch
  One laurel more to share between us.
(I mention all of this to no man
Except perhaps a friend—or Roman.)

Now that my time has come to die
  (Within a score or two of years)
I wish to have it known that I
  Will gladly leave this vale of tears,
Because (and how my friends will chortle!)
I shall be more than just immortal.

Into the clear and boundless air
  I shall ascend with sounding pinions,
Shouting a buoyant "I-don't-care,"
  Laughing at kings and their dominions.
And folks will say (and well you know it)
Q. Flaccus? Ah, he *was* a poet!

My wings shall sprout. Why, even now
I feel all creepy and absurdlike;
My skin is roughening somehow,
My legs are positively birdlike.
And see—sure as I'm growing older—
Feathers and quills on either shoulder!

Thus shall I fly about as long
As I've the slightest inclination,
A veritable Bird-of-Song
Without a local habitation.
Like Icarus I'll travel surely
And (need I say it?) more securely.

From where the Dacian hides in shame
To where the river Rhone runs muddy,
All men will celebrate my name,
My works will constitute a Study.
I shall be loved by people pat in
The ways of elementary Latin.

Then let there be no dirge for me,
No petty grief nor lamentation;
Why weep for one who's sure to be
A joy and honor to creation!
Ah, you're a lucky man, by Venus,
To have a friend like me, Maecenas.

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